

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 2, 5 and 19, without prejudice, and amend claims 1, 3-4, 6-8, 10, 13-15, and 18-21 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an ~~authorization~~ authorization;

wherein in the case where a same value has been preserved in said default input password and said password for access protection, said password verifying unit copies, prior to the password input of the user, a value of said default input password to the

user input password and collates the same with said password for access protection, thereby permitting or inhibiting an access.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization. ~~An apparatus according to claim 1,~~
wherein

said password preserving unit further has a user input password area to store a user input password input by a user, and

said password verifying unit is constructed in a manner such that

at the start of the use of the apparatus such as turn-on of a power source, command reset, error reset, medium insertion, or the like, said first password is read out and written into said user input password area, an access permission is established if the first password is the password, or an access inhibition is established if the first password is not the password, on the basis of a collation between the first password in said user input password area and the second password for access protection, and

after said access permission or inhibition is established, each time there is a password input of the user, the user input password is written into said user input password area and, subsequently, the access permission inhibition is established on the basis of a collation between the user input password in said user input password area and the second password for access protection.

4. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said password preserving unit further has a user input password area to store a user input password input by a user, and

said password verifying unit is constructed in a manner such that

at the start of the use of the apparatus such as turn-on of a power source, command reset, error reset, medium insertion, or the like, the apparatus waits for the password input by the user in a state where said first password is read out and written into said user input password area, when there is the user password input, the user input password is overwritten into the first password in said user input password area, and after that, the password in said user input password area and said password for access protection are compared and the access protection is controlled, and

when there is no user password input and/or in the case where the password is an empty character train even if there is the user password input, the comparison between the first password in said user input password area and the second password for access protection is executed and the access protection is controlled.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-

based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization. ~~An apparatus according to claim 1,~~
wherein

said password preserving unit preserves said first password and said second password for access protection into said medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said first password and said second password for access protection from said medium and stores into an apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

7. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization.

An apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein

said password preserving unit preserves said first password into a non-volatile memory of an apparatus main body and preserves said second password for access protection into the medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said second password for access protection from said medium and stores into the apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

8. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization.

An apparatus according to claim 1,
wherein

said password preserving unit preserves said second password for access protection into a non-volatile memory of an apparatus main body and preserves said first password into the medium, and

said password verifying unit reads out said first password from said medium and stores into the apparatus main body at the start of the use of the apparatus and controls the access protection.

9. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein in said medium, a password preserving area to preserve said second password is provided in a specific area which cannot be accessed by an ordinary read command and write command.

10. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password,
compares the first password and the second password: if in agreement, issues an
authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization. ~~An apparatus according to claim 1,~~
the storing apparatus further comprising,

a password rewriting unit for rewriting said default input password or said first password for access protection on the basis of a dedicated command from an upper apparatus.

11. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said medium is a medium fixedly enclosed in the apparatus main body.

12. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said medium is a removable medium which is detachable from the apparatus main body.

13. (Currently amended) A storing apparatus for use with a
computer-based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a
medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user
to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

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said password preserving unit preserves a plurality of kinds of passwords for access protection according to kinds of access protection, and

said password verifying unit permits an access by an ordinary command corresponding to the kind of said first password for access protection in which a collation coincidence is obtained.

14. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein as said first passwords for access protection, said password preserving unit preserves a write/read password to permit an access by a read command and a write command and a read only password to permit only an access by the read command, and

said password verifying unit permits the access by the ordinary write command or read command when the collation coincidence of said write/read password is obtained and permits the access by only the ordinary read command when the collation coincidence of said read only password is obtained.

15. (Currently Amended) A storing apparatus for use with a computer-based system in which a first user can protect access to information recorded on a medium with a second password, and can selectively permit said first user and a second user to access the information without the second password, comprising:

a password preserving unit for preserving a first password and the second password; and

a password verifying unit which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization. ~~An apparatus according to claim 1, the storing apparatus further comprising, comprising:~~

a validity term setting unit for setting a validity term into said first password.

16. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said validity term setting unit counts the number of using times of the apparatus by a counter and, when a value of said counter reaches a predetermined value, said validity term setting unit forcibly changes said first password to a value different from the first password so far.

17. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein said validity term setting unit sets a time of a validity term and, when a present time in case of using the apparatus exceeds said validity term, said validity term setting unit forcibly changes said first password to a value different from the first password so far.

18. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting access to information recorded on a medium with a second password for use with a computer-based system, comprising:

a password preserving step of preserving the password and a first password;

and

a password verifying step which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password, compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

wherein in the case where a same value has been preserved in said first password and said second password for access protection, in said password verifying step, prior to the password input of the user, a value of said first password is copied to the user input password and is collated with said second password for access protection, thereby permitting or inhibiting an access.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting access to information recorded on a medium with a second password for use with a computer-based system, comprising:

a password preserving step of preserving the password and a first password;

and

a password verifying step which, when an access authorization is requested by entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password,
compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an
authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization. ~~A method according to claim 18,~~
~~wherein~~

wherein in said password preserving step, a plurality of kinds of passwords for
access protection according to kinds of said access protection are preserved, and

in said password verifying step, an access by an ordinary command
corresponding to the kind of said first password for access protection in which a collation
coincidence is obtained is permitted.

21. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting access to
information recorded on a medium with a second password for use with a computer-based
system, comprising:

a password preserving step of preserving the password and a first password;
and

a password verifying step which, when an access authorization is requested by
entering a password, compares the entered password with the second password; if in
agreement, issues an authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization;

and when an access authorization is requested without entering a password,
compares the first password and the second password; if in agreement, issues an

authorization, and if not, refuses to issue an authorization~~A method according to claim 18,~~

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further,

the method further comprising a validity term setting step of setting a validity term into said first password.